

Summary of Findings:
Survey of the Rockefeller Foundation Grantees

APRIL 2011

The Rockefeller Foundation (RF) commissioned the Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) to survey our grantees in the summer of 2010 and to provide a Grantee Perception Report (GPR)¹ to the Foundation. The following is a summary of CEP's findings.

Background on the Grantee Perception Report

Since February 2003, CEP has conducted surveys of grantees about their perceptions of and experiences with their philanthropic funders both on behalf of individual funders and independently. The purpose of these surveys is two-fold: to gather data that is useful to individual funders and to form the basis for broadly applicable research reports. The GPR shows an individual philanthropic funder its grantee perceptions relative to a set of perceptions of other funders whose grantees were surveyed by CEP. To develop the comparative data, CEP used a standard survey instrument and then allowed RF to add some custom questions.

The extent to which we achieve impact as a Foundation is determined to a large extent by the work of grantees who are our chosen agents of change. Our grantees' perceptions of whether we strengthen their work, and their perceptions of the Foundation's communications and impact, are therefore important in the context of our efforts to achieve our intended impact.

Methodology

CEP surveyed the grantees of The Rockefeller Foundation during May and June of 2010 using an online survey. CEP also surveyed RF's grantees in 2005. Where possible, ratings from 2005 are referenced to provide trend information. In 2010, 524 grantees were surveyed, and 326 (62%) responded. We were pleased with response rate, which was higher than the response rate in 2005 (426 of 790, or 54%), and close to the median response rate for the GPR overall, which is 68% over the past seven years.

Our 2010 survey was conducted of those grantees who had an active grant in 2009.

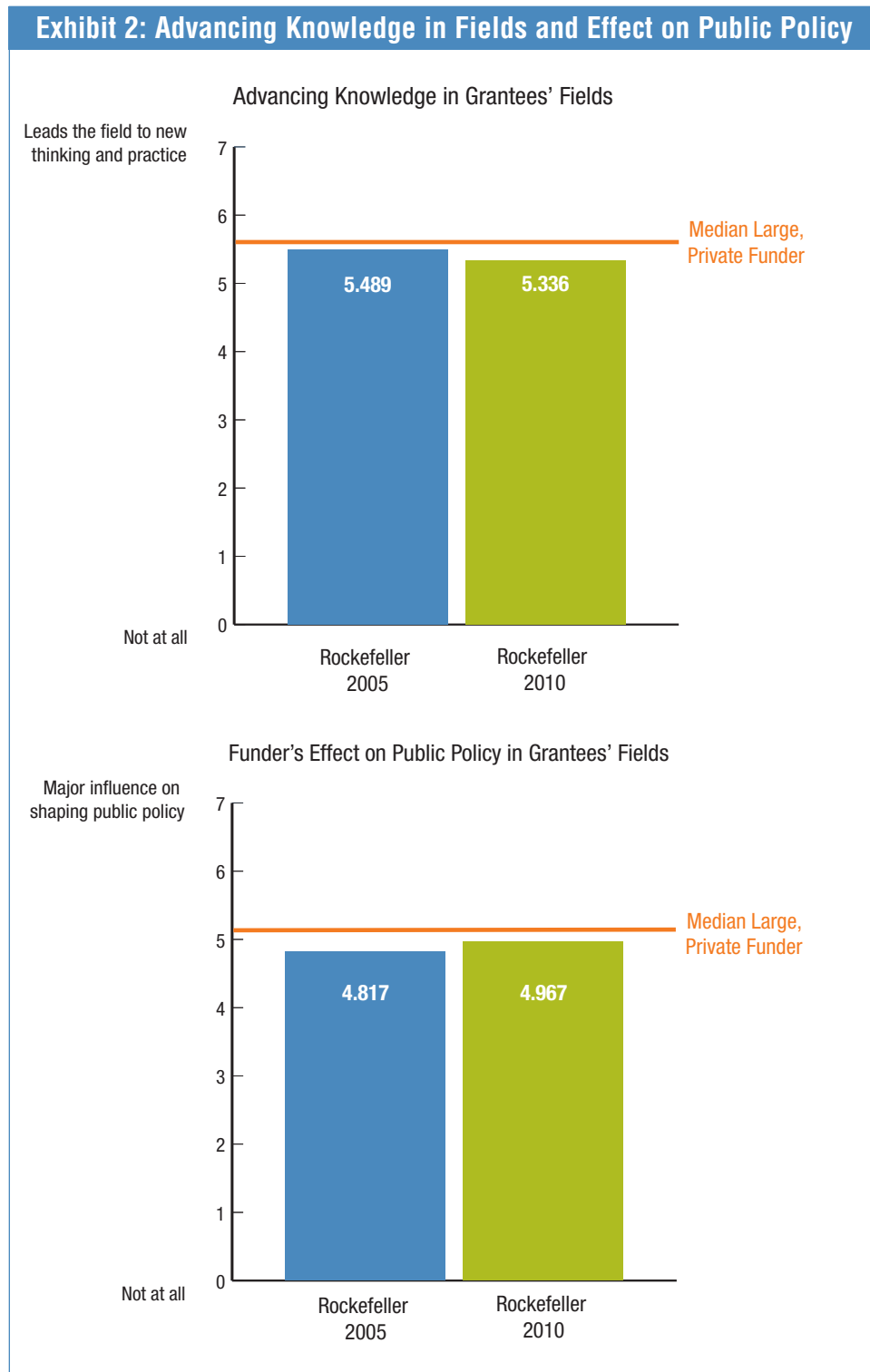
Exhibit 1: Large, Private Funders
The Atlantic Philanthropies
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
Carnegie Corporation of New York
The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
The Ford Foundation
Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
The McKnight Foundation
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Rockefeller Brothers Fund
The Rockefeller Foundation
The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
W.K. Kellogg Foundation

CEP compares our average and/or median grantee ratings to the average and/or median ratings from grantees in CEP's dataset of 253 funders, collected over the last seven years, as well as a cohort of 13 large private foundations that are similar to the Foundation. The peer cohort, chosen by the Foundation, was comprised of the following foundations (see Exhibit 1).

¹ Grantee Perception Report is a registered trademark of the Center for Effective Philanthropy.

Summary of Findings²

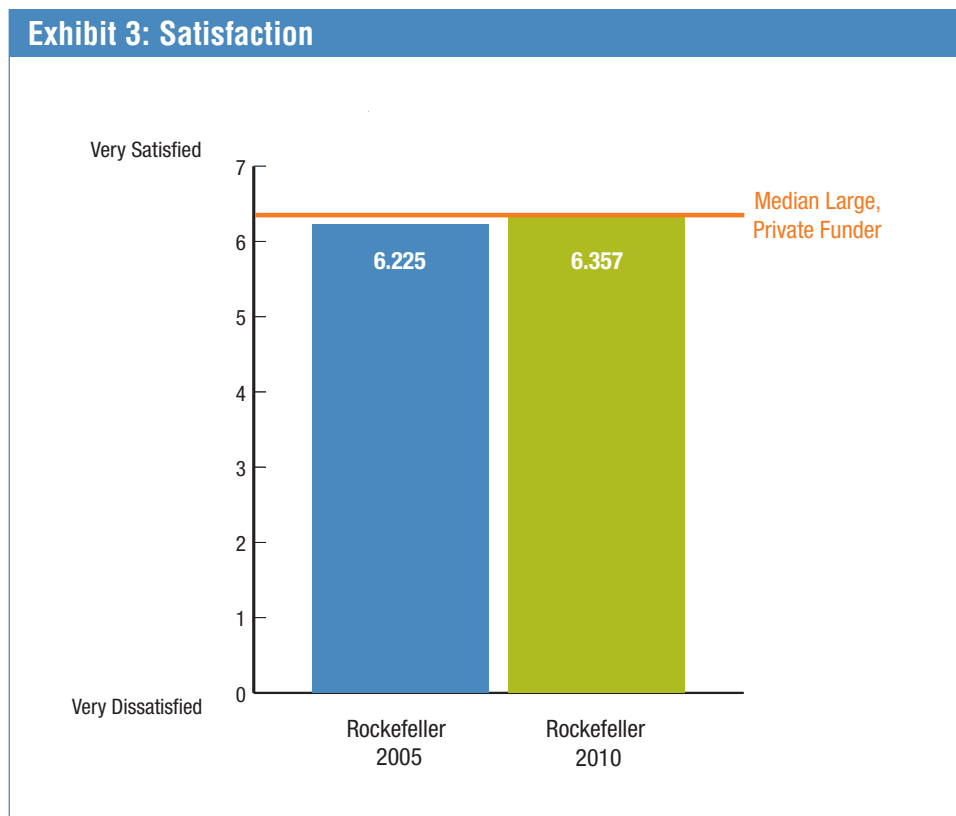
Grantees' ratings of RF are mixed, with areas of relative strength compared to other funders, some meaningful improvements over 2005, and areas of lower ratings. Grantees rate the Foundation highly for its ability to advance knowledge and affect public policy in their fields.



² The charts in this summary are not CEP's standard presentation of the data. For example, CEP's standard charts present a comparison not just against our peer cohort but also against their full dataset of 253 grantees; they also show the full range of responses to each question. For ease of presentation, we have simplified the data to highlight the findings that we found particularly enlightening and helpful to us as we move forward in our work.

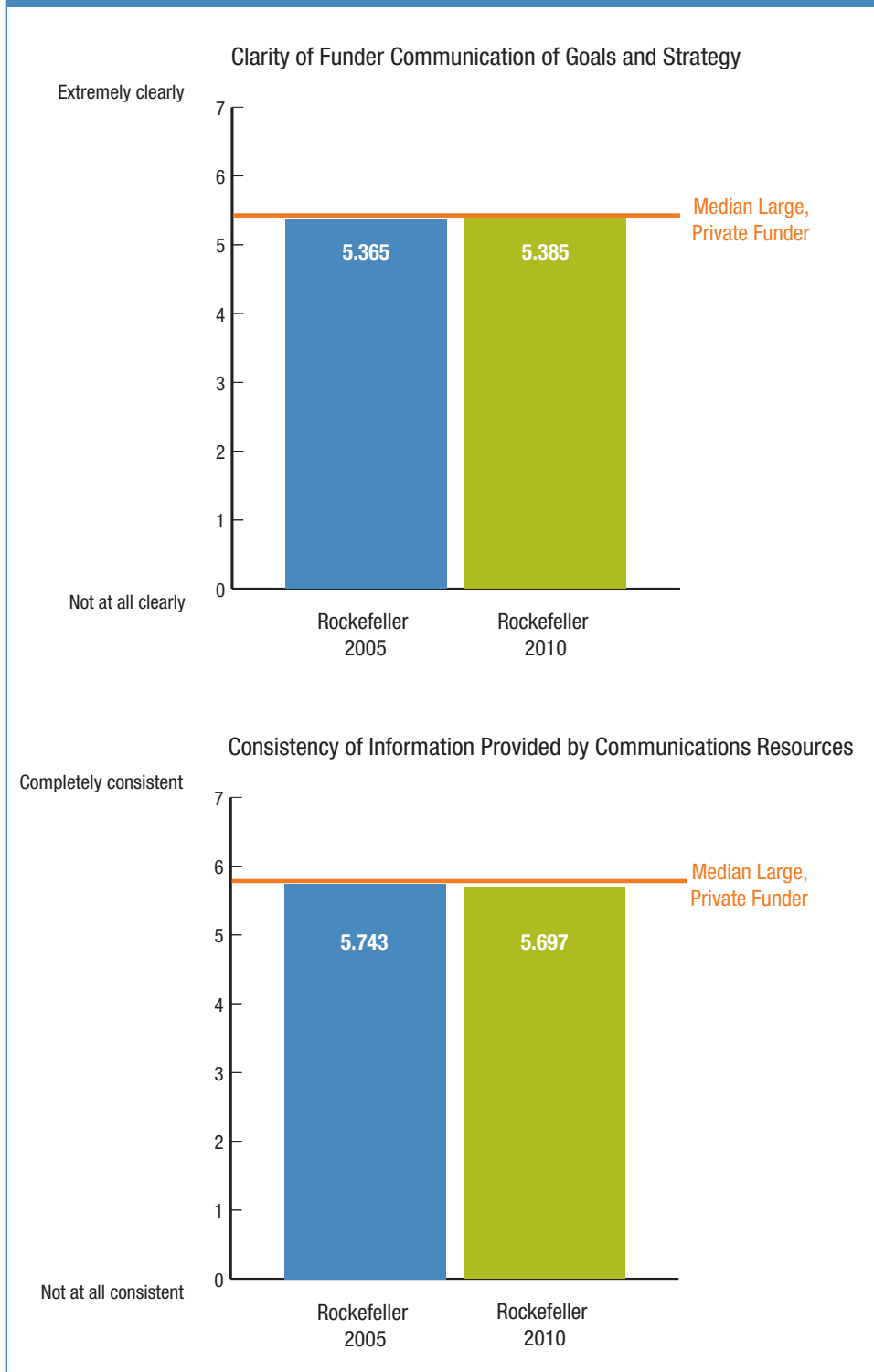
Our 2010 grantees are significantly more satisfied than our 2005 grantees. They also rate the Foundation significantly higher on fairness and responsiveness, and noted that we also tend to provide a higher than typical proportion of grantees with helpful assistance beyond the grant.

Our grantees rate the quality of their interactions with us at the median compared to our peer cohort—and significantly higher than our 2005 grantees did—but also suggest that we could improve in this area. A larger than typical proportion of our grantees report that their primary contact changed within the last six months. Some grantees commented that our staff seem “stretched” and they suggest that we should “increase professional staffing.” While the proportion of our grantees who have received a site visit has fallen significantly since 2005, those who did receive a site visit rate us significantly more positively on a number of measures across the report.



Our grantees rate the clarity and consistency of our communications similar to our 2005 grantees and lower than three-quarters of funders in CEP’s dataset—though close to the median of our peer cohort. Grantees also rate the helpfulness of our written resources lower than those of the median funder in the full dataset. However, they rate the helpfulness of their personal communications with our staff more positively and similar to the median. They comment on this disparity, noting that, “all in all, I have always found working with Foundation staff to be the only way to go.”

Exhibit 4: Communications Measures



Rockefeller receives lower-than-typical ratings on measures related to perceptions of impact. Despite receiving higher-than-typical ratings on our ability to advance knowledge and affect public policy in our grantees' fields, grantees rate the foundation lower than three-quarters of funders in CEP's dataset for impact on our grantees' fields. This rating is trending lower—although not statistically significantly lower—than the rating we received on this measure in 2005. We are also rated low compared to other funders for our impact on and understanding of our grantees' local communities. In addition, grantees give us lower than typical ratings for our impact on and understanding of their organizations. And we are also rated below typical—and significantly lower than the rating we received in 2005—for the effect of our funding on our grantees' ability to sustain their work in the future. Grantees comment that our priorities seem to “shift” quickly and this makes it “hard to understand what [RF is] likely to be responsive to.”

Exhibit 5: Impact on Grantees' Fields

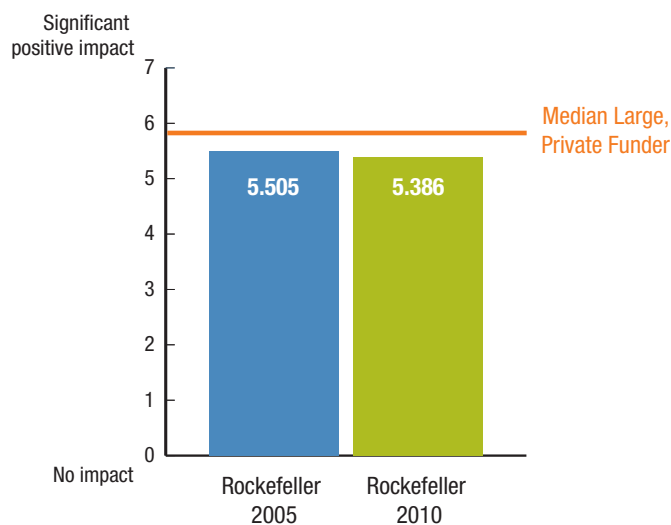
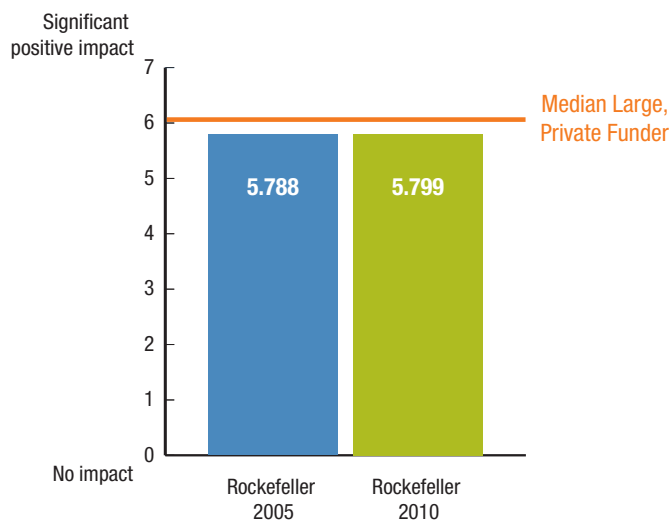


Exhibit 6: Impact on Grantee Organizations



We provide helpful patterns of non-monetary assistance to a larger proportion of our grantees than is typical. Our grantees especially appreciate our role as a facilitator of convenings and collaborations. They say these opportunities for interaction with their peers are “extremely useful for coordinating strategies, tactics, and work plans.”

The Foundation is rated near the median of our peer cohort—and near the median overall—for the helpfulness of both our selection and our reporting and evaluation processes.

Exhibit 7: Helpfulness of Selection Process

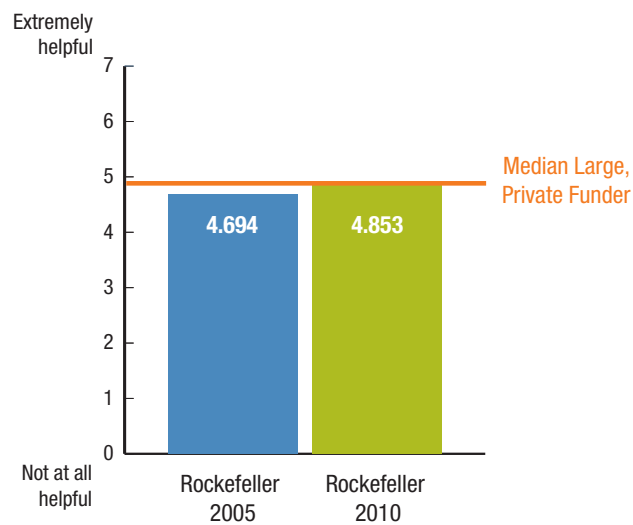
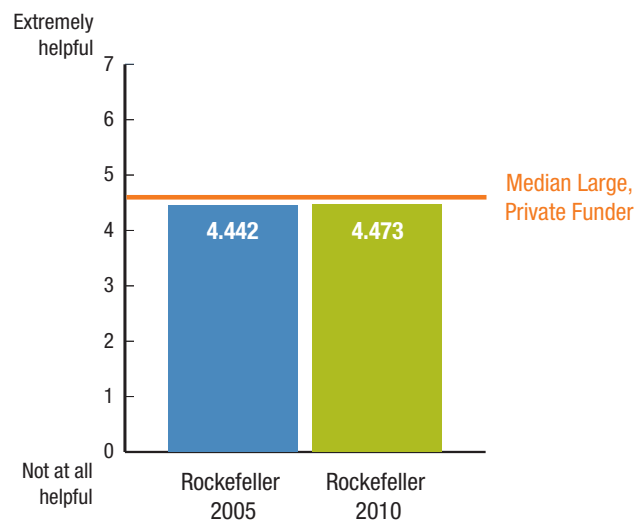


Exhibit 8: Helpfulness of Reporting and Evaluation Processes



The GPR reported that we are hands-on in the selection process, with grantees rating us as more involved than typical and applying more pressure on them to modify their priorities in order to receive funding. This hands-on approach is mentioned by grantees in both positive and negative terms. One commented, “A personal meeting with the Foundation was extremely useful in making the grant application. All email and personal interactions with the Foundation have been very focused, helpful, and results-oriented.” Another grantee said, “Grantmaking takes up so much time that we must do a cost benefits analysis to determine whether or not to apply for a grant.” However, on a measure of return on administrative time, our grantees receive \$3,333 per hour spent by those grantees on administrative processes, up from \$2,364 in 2005, and greater than that of the typical funder, though similar to that of the median peer funder.

CEP has noted to us that the perceptual data collected through the GPR should be viewed in light of our choices about how we structure our grantmaking. Relative to our peer cohort, we make grants that are slightly smaller, shorter term, and directed to supporting younger organizations. RF grantees are more likely to be first-time grant recipients compared to grantees of the typical foundation in the full comparative set. Almost all of our grants are for program or project support, with just five percent of grantees receive general operating support.

Finally, we also asked our grantees additional custom questions (Exhibit 9) that are important to the way the Foundation operates, and that are unique to our survey. Thus, no comparative data are available.

The custom questions relate to our role as a thought partner in our grantees’ work and its importance for achieving grantee organizations’ objectives, our leadership in grantees’ field of work, and grantees’ use of funding from RF—such as whether it was used to fund new and innovative work. Ratings on these custom questions average toward the high end of the 1-7 scale. Among these questions, the areas of the most positive grantees ratings are “extent to which Rockefeller is a thought partner” and “importance of Foundation’s role as a thought partner.”

Exhibit 9: Grantee Survey—Custom Questions

Item	Average Rating	% Rating of 7
Extent to which RF is seen as a thought partner in our grantees’ work	5.5	32%
Importance of RF as a thought partner in grantees’ work	5.5	32%
Extent to which RF is a leader in the grantees’ field	5.4	33%